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Bulletin

Title: Obligation of Appropriations: Fiscal Year Chargeable

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Locations, and CSREES Fundholders

This Bulletin provides general guidelines to aid managers and fundholders in deciding spending priorities before the fiscal year 1998 annual appropriations obligation authority expires on September 30, 1998.

Note #1: General Services Administration (GSA) issued a regulation which provides authority for a major change in funding **severable service** contracts (Federal Register/Vol. 60, No. 140 / Fri. July 21, 1995 / Rules and Regulations.) It authorizes Federal agencies to enter into a basic contract or procure **severable services** for a period that begins in one fiscal year and ends in the next fiscal year. This authority permits charging the total contract value to the fiscal year that the contract performance begins. Such contracts may not exceed 1 year.

The following guidelines are offered for selected categories of transactions to clarify unique situations regarding the fiscal year to be charged. These examples are prefaced by an overriding rule which specifies that ("**... a fiscal year appropriation may be obligated only to meet a legitimate or bona fide need arising in ... the fiscal year for which the appropriation was made.**") Once stated, it should be understood that there are situations where a bona fide need exists in the current fiscal year, enabling the obligation of current year funds, but the receipt of goods and services or performance may not occur until the next fiscal year. Further, the bona fide need rule does permit purchases to be made to replenish legitimate inventories at reasonable or historic levels. The bona fide need, in this instance, would be the requirement to maintain a reasonable level of inventory items to avoid disruption of future operations.

Determining whether a bona fide need exists depends on the facts and circumstances of a particular case. There is no precise rule prescribed to determine what constitutes a bona fide need. Managers and fundholders must exercise their prudent judgement in making such determinations.

The following are examples to assist managers in deciding their spending priorities:

- **Service Contracts** - Annual appropriated funds may be obligated for the **total amount** of the contract at the time it is awarded; or, prorate/charge the service contract costs to the specific fiscal year the performance is completed. The contract period may begin in the current fiscal year and end in the next fiscal year if the contract does not exceed 1 year.
- **Equipment, Supplies, and Expense Items** - Obligate the annual appropriation(s) for: the total amount of items needed and contracted for in the current fiscal year, even though they may be received in the subsequent fiscal year; and, items needed to maintain normal inventories of offices or scientific supplies or other consumables such as oil, gas, lubricants, or other bulk expense type items where it is normal practice to purchase in bulk and maintain reasonable inventory level.
- **Training** - The cost of training, tuition, and associated materials should be charged to the fiscal year in which the training request is approved (signed), even though the training may not commence until the following fiscal year. This practice is acceptable, provided that the training represents a bona fide need of the agency in the fiscal year in which it was approved and the time lag between the approval and the training is not excessive. Excessive is defined as not exceeding 6 months, as a general rule.

- **Relocation Travel Expenses** - The cost of relocating employees--including per diem, commercial transportation, government bill of lading (GBL), and real estate related costs are charged to the fiscal year that the relocation orders are issued (signed), even though relocation may not occur until a subsequent year. Please note: employees, under certain circumstances, may have up to 3 years to sell their home and be reimbursed residence real estate related relocation costs. These charges, be it 3 years hence, are properly charged to the fiscal year in which the orders were issued.
- **Temporary Duty Travel Expenses** - Travel and transportation expenses of temporary duty beginning in one fiscal year and ending in another fiscal year must be charged against the appropriations current and available when the travel expenses are incurred (i.e., meal, lodging, per diem, and transportation.) However, tickets for **round trip** transportation may be charged to the appropriation current at the time the employee begins temporary duty travel. Temporary duty travel associated with taking training courses must be charged to the fiscal year the travel begins.

The above guidelines are supplemented with the following information which cross references obligating documents to the fiscal year to be charged.

Type of Obligating Documents and Fiscal Year Chargeable

Purchase Orders - For supplies, subscriptions, publications, common-use inventory replacement items, equipment, etc.

Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPA's) - For supplies and services.

Non-Severable Contracts, Cooperative Agreements, and Grants - For finished end products or items like a specific research contract or agreement, construction, repair & maintenance, and energy retrofit projects, etc. They also include personal and non-personal services that require **delivery of specific finished end-product**, e.g., evaluation study; development of a computer model; development of a species database for a research project, etc.

Severable Contracts and Agreements - For personal and non-personal services involving interagency and/or research support agreements of a **continuing nature** for 12 months or less, and the need arises from day-to-day, or month-to-month, e.g., leased property, rentals, and maintenance repairs of equipment, property, etc.

Note #2: The general rule is to obligate the total amount of the order to the available annual (current year) or no-year appropriations based on the fiscal year period when the bona fide need was decided and the obligating document was approved (signed).

Type of Obligating Documents

Fiscal Year Chargeable

Salaries and Wages

Pay period dates when the services are rendered

Incentive/Cash Awards

Date awards approved (signed)

Note #3: The following special guidance applies regarding the fiscal year chargeable for incentive, performance, special act, or other cash awards.

Charging Fiscal Year 1998 Funds

All awards to be charged to fiscal year 1998 **must** be approved, signed, and **dated** by the approval official on or before September 30, 1998.

One of two processing methods may be used to ensure fiscal year 1998 accounting records reflect award charges.

First processing method, awards documentation should be submitted to Human Resources Division (HRD) for processing on or before **September 18, 1998**. HRD will ensure that all awards received on or before this date will be processed during fiscal year 1998 processing cycles with the National Finance Center (NFC). These awards will automatically be charged against the fundholder's fiscal year 1998 accounting code as indicated in Form AD-287-2 (Recommendation and Approval of Awards).

Second processing method, awards submitted to HRD for processing after **September 18, 1998**, (which cite fiscal year 1998 funds) will be processed by HRD in early October. Therefore, fundholders must ensure that their servicing budget, fiscal, or other administrative staff submit period end estimates to NFC for all awards submitted to HRD after **September 18, 1998**.

The preceding guidance only applies to awards chargeable to fiscal year 1998 funds.

Charging Fiscal Year 1999 Funds

Awards approved and dated after September 30, 1998, must be charged to fiscal year 1999 accounting citations. These awards may be processed using routine procedures anytime after October 1, 1998.

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Lump Sum Payments (Annual Leave and Compensatory Leave)	Date of Separation
Severance Pay	Pay period dates covered in payment (day-to-day basis)
Temporary Duty Travel Expenses, i.e. Meals, Lodging, and Per Diem	Date actual travel is performed
Common Carrier Transportation (excludes GBL's expenses)	Date travel begins
Travel via Commercial Rental Vehicle and POV (mileage)	Date travel is actually performed (day-to-day basis)
GSA Car Rental	Date billing period ends (GSA bills on Sept. 30 to include rental through Sept. 30)
Relocation Expenses (all related costs including per diem and commercial transportation which include GBL expenses)	Date travel authorization is approved (signed)
Training (Courses and Seminars)	Date training bona fide need was approved and training request was signed
Tort Claims	Date claim approved
Post Office Box (rental)	Date rental begins
GSA Customer Supply Center and Gasoline	All invoices received on or before October 31. - Charged to immediate prior fiscal year
Utilities (gas, electric, water, etc.)	Date billing period ends
Security Clearance	Date security clearance request issued to Office of Personnel Management

Note: Check with your servicing contracting and personnel office for any established cut-off dates that may apply to processing documents for this fiscal year.

Please call your Area Budget and Fiscal Officer, Area Administrative or Headquarters Staff Office, if you have any questions.

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S. M. HELMRICH

Director

Financial Management Division